

The National Register of Historic Places includes several “properties” in Indiana that aren’t buildings. These sites and objects are often unique types of resources, such as the Spencer Park Dentzel Carousel, Nickel Plate Road Steam Locomotive # 587, the U.S.S. LST 325, and the diesel sternwheel towboat Donald B (Barbara H).

Another is the twin-engine Lockheed PV-2 Harpoon aircraft, nicknamed “Hot Stuff” which is owned and operated by the American Military Heritage Foundation (AMHF).



The PV-2 Harpoons was an anti-submarine patrol bomber used throughout the Pacific in WWII. They normally operated without fighter escort since they were heavily armed and could defend themselves. They patrolled important shipping lanes for American bases and were the only aircraft capable of outrunning the fast Japanese Zero. Equipped with long range fuel tanks, they were capable of making bombing runs to the northern Japanese home islands from the Aleutians.

“Hot Stuff” was built near the very end of WWII, was used in the reserves, and was retired in October 1953. After peacetime conversion and use as an agricultural sprayer, this aircraft was acquired by the AMHF, which has been continually repairing, restoring, and reconditioning it and operating it on the air show circuit since 1990. Unfortunately, the plane became grounded due to the failure of the right engine and the inability of the foundation to afford a properly reconditioned and rebuilt replacement.



As a National Register listed property, owned by a not-for-profit organization, AMHF and the PV-2 were eligible to receive a federal Historic Preservation Fund grant to assist with the purchase and installation of a fully reconditioned vintage Pratt & Whitney R-2800-31 radial engine. Hot Stuff is once again air-worthy and was able to fly in the Indianapolis Air Show in the summer of 2010. Match to the federal grant funds was provided by the in-kind labor of highly skilled aircraft mechanics who spent many hours removing the failed engine and reinstalling and calibrating the reconditioned engine.



This particular aircraft, based just outside Indianapolis, is used to help tell the story of the tragic sinking of the heavy cruiser USS Indianapolis which was sunk by a Japanese submarine. An earlier version of this Lockheed aircraft, a PV-1 Ventura, first discovered the oil slick that ultimately led to the rescue of 316 sailors after five days drifting in shark-infested waters. The loss of the USS Indianapolis and 880 members of her crew is largely overlooked in history because it coincided with the surrender of Japan in the very final days of the war.

In 2011, the DHPA chose the American Military Heritage Foundation to receive the Award for Outstanding Grant-funded Restoration project to recognize the skill and dedication of their members in the rehabilitation and preservation of this unique piece of history.

